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JOHN PLAYFORD, AND 17th-CENTURY MUSIC PUBLISHING

By FRANK KIDSON

PARISH Clerk and publisher, "Honest" John Playford. Honest, an enviable epithet to have applied to one who makes profit from the labour and brains of others.

But it appears to have been a well-merited one, for John Playford throughout the whole forty years of his trading seems to have won the trust and friendship—or more truly the affection—of the musicians who contributed to his publications and of the amateurs who bought them.

We may fitly here recall the character and status of an early-time London Parish Clerk, as depicted in the songs and the novels of the 18th century, with a full belief that those of the preceding century were just about the same.

A rather meek individual, much absorbed in his professional duties on Sundays and an appendage to his parson on week days, who rehearsed his psalm tunes at odd intervals and was first among the choice spirits of a convivial club, which met in a snug Tavern within the shadow of the City Church he served.

Here we may suppose he would lead off (first setting the note true with his pitch pipe, the insignia of his calling) a humorous catch, none too delicate in its wit, for catches were not for ladies' ears, and at the conclusion slapping his neighbour on the shoulder and draining his tankard with the best. We might also imagine him as a man who did not disdain to run errands for his clerical master, perchance to dress his Reverence's wig if his talents lay that way, or even at a push of household difficulty help in a domestic job. In the country the parish clerk was often the schoolmaster of the village. Sometimes (many did so) he would publish by subscription a book of Psalm Tunes with rules for understanding the complexities of the gamut. He might also have been gravedigger on occasion. Does not Caleb Quotem in *The Wags of Windsor* sing:

I'm parish clerk and sexton here,
I'm painter, glazier, auctioneer,
In short I am factotem;
I make a watch, I mend a pump,
For plumber's work my knack is—

and so forth.



IOHANNIS

PLAYFORD

Then we have a horrible picture of the drunken 18th century parson and equally drunken parish clerk, reading the burial service over a child, in that once popular lyric "The Vicar and Moses."

But John Playford was far removed from the usual ignorant parish clerk of the period. He came of a good Norfolk family and held the responsible position of clerk to The Temple Church, near the door of which he had his shop and dwelling house in one, until he removed his dwelling place for the better air of Islington. The son of an earlier John Playford of Norwich, he was born in 1623. Sir John Hawkins and Burney both give the date as 1613, but this is obviously a clerical error, for the correct date, 1623, is fixed by the stated age on different portraits which form the frontispieces to various editions of his *Introduction to the skill of Musick*.

In 1684 he was feeling his infirmities, for he then handed his business over to his son Henry, and died in 1686—only sixty-three years of age.

What John Playford's early life or education was we have no knowledge. He was in London as a "Stationer" (that is, a publisher) in 1648, for in that year he had registered certain non-musical works in Stationers' Hall. He evidently had had some musical education; we may guess he may have been a chorister in Norwich Cathedral, and as a young man had sufficient influence to get himself appointed to the responsible position of Clerk to The Temple Church. It was in 1650 that he began his association with the musical world.

In 1650 the head of King Charles had fallen, times were settling down, the fighting was ended, and the Parliamentarians having got their own way were more prepared to countenance the pleasures and recreations they had before denounced.

Playford was, all through, a Royalist and so were most of the musicians who called him friend. The Roundheads were psalm singers in public, but without doubt were as merry as other folk in private, and Playford could enable them to be so to the top of their bent with his publications of witty catches, and country dances. His first musical publication, as all musical antiquaries know, was *The English Dancing Master*, a volume of country dance tunes with "plaine and easie rules" for dancing to them. The book is in "broad quarto" and its title page is adorned with a charming etching by W. Hollar depicting Cupid playing a lute while a lady and a gentleman advance to each other; the background shows a number of ladies and gentlemen seated and standing. There are 104 tunes, the music being rudely

printed from type. The imprint gives "Printed by Thomas Harper and are to be sold by John Playford at his shop in the Inner Temple neere the Church doore 1651." It was really issued in November of the preceding year. So far as I know but two copies of the work exist; one among the "King's pamphlets" in the British Museum, and the other, picked up by a rare chance, is in the library of the late Sir John Stainer.

Most of the imprints give the address of his shop, which was as before said also his house, as "Near the Church door" or "in the Inner Temple." Hawkins suggests this meant that the premises were "at the foot of the steps, either to the right hand or to the left, descending from the Inner Temple Lane to the cloisters." I, the present writer, believe that the shop itself is shown on the plate of the Temple Church in Maitland's *History of London*, 1756, which shows a square two storied building wedged against the church door in the Cloister Court. All trace of its site, however, is now lost, as extensive "restorations" have from time to time taken place in the church itself and clearances in its surroundings.

It may be useful to review the condition of musical England—so far as publication of compositions was concerned—when John Playford began his publishing career. From some extraordinary reasoning, dating from the very time of the first practice of printing in England, the art could only be carried on by permission of the reigning monarch, who at his will permitted or refused permission to use the printing press. In the reign of Elizabeth this patent had to a certain extent lapsed save in the matter of music printing. For services rendered at small wages in the Chapel Royal the Queen in the seventeenth year of her reign, 1574, granted to Thomas Tallis and William Byrde the sole right of monopoly of music printing and the importations of music into England.

This privilege they could, and did, assign for substantial payment to whom they would, and it formed some sort of income. Tallis having died in 1585, Byrde held it alone for ten years, when the patent expired. In 1598 a fresh patent was granted to Thomas Morley, also a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, as Byrd and Tallis had been. The Crown patents became such a danger to trading that an enquiry into the matter was held in the House of Commons, and Morley's patent having come to an end about 1614 the privilege of printing was open to anyone. In spite of and during all these restrictions, for the period, an enormous number of well printed musical works came from the

London presses and many musical works were freely imported from Italy and other parts of the Continent.

It was the Madrigal era and music in private, if not in public, was a great factor in social life. William Barley, Thomas Este, with Thomas Snodham, his successor, and John Windet were all printers of importance of musical works, while John Day was kept busy printing and reprinting the Metrical Psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins, "with apt notes to sing them withall."

Soon after the death of Elizabeth there was a considerable slackening in the issue of music books. From about 1620 to the advent of John Playford as a music publisher in 1650 scarcely a music book of any description, save a few editions of the Metrical Psalms, can be referred to that interval of thirty years.

Whether the political unrest was the cause or not I cannot say, but the paucity of musical works stands to testify the fact. It must have been indeed a melancholy generation. The Parliamentarians sang psalms; so did the religious minded of the other side. It is commonly believed that the Cromwellian party discountenanced frivolous songs and music in general, and while this belief has been controverted, the fact remains that an ordinance is in existence commanding the destruction of organs in churches and the like acts of vandalism.

But John Playford seems to have seen the turning of the tide and was bold enough to publish his book of country dances and to follow that up with an enlarged edition a couple of years afterwards. To those who are interested in the revived movement of folk—and country—dancing John Playford stands for little else than his editions of country dances, but the better knowledge of the musical historian recognises Playford as the greatest pioneer in musical publication England has had. The country dance book of 1650-1 had its simple tunes very rudely printed from movable type and the music was neither barred nor harmonised. The one hundred and four tunes were popular airs and well selected from a musical point of view. Most of them were put into print for the first time, from tradition, and the whole book in its successive editions is a treasure-house of the popular tunes of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. Indeed, had it been absent much of our richest folk-music would have been forever lost. The 1652 edition was printed in rather smaller oblong size with 112 tunes still unbarred and, as a manuscript note by Dr. Crotch, in the Bodleian copy, states, "the difficulty is increased by some of the tunes being in the G cleft on the first line, others by G on the second." But in the third edition of 1665 Playford has

amended all this; he has barred the tunes, put them all into the proper G clef, added many to the dance tunes, and put 85 French dances and other tunes at the end of the book, which in due course were published, with additions, separately as *Apollo's Banquet for the Treble Violin*. In 1651 Playford had some business connections with a John Benson, whose name appears on the imprints of one or two works at this time. Also, in 1665, the name Zach Watkins is coupled with that of Playford. It is doubtful, however, whether these were partnerships.

It is not necessary to follow in detail the whole eighteen editions of the *Dancing Master*. Suffice it to say that each edition grew larger and tunes were replaced by others more in favour. The 7th edition, dated 1686, is the last that bears the imprint of John Playford. The 8th, for 1690, is printed for "H. Playford", the son Henry, and his name or initial stands instead of the elder John until the 14th edition, 1709, after which year the Playford books were republished by John Young, at the Dolphin and Crown in St. Paul's Churchyard. *The Dancing Master* ultimately attained three volumes and the latest edition is dated 1728.

We may turn back to John Playford "at his shop neere the church dore." After the first issue of *The English Dancing Master* his musical ventures became bolder. His second publication was *The Musicall Banquet*, dated 1651. This is an oblong quarto, of which one copy only (I think I am correct in so saying) is preserved, that being in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Its lengthy title describes its contents as "Choice varieties of Musick." It was printed by T. H. (Thomas Harper) and was published by John Benson from St Dunstan's Churchyard and by John Playford "in the Inner Temple, neere the Church doore," 1651. It consists of three parts, the first being devoted to Lessons on the Lira Viol, the second "of new Choyce Allmans, Corants, and Sarabands, for Treble and Basse Viol, composed by William Lawes and other excellent masters." The third part is of "New and Choyce Catches and Rounds, to which is added some new Rules and Directions for such as learne to sing or to play the Viol." These three parts afterwards developed into *Musick's Recreation on the Lyra Viol*, of which there were many editions. The second became *Courtly Masquing Ayres*, while the third took the title *Catch that Catch Can*, which later had the subtitle *The Musical Companion*, this, in 1672, becoming the only title; later editions became *The Pleasant Musical Companion*.

"Rules to sing and play on the Viol" was the germ from which *The Introduction to the Skill of Musick* sprang. Of this

very excellent little handbook no less than nineteen editions appeared between 1654 and 1730. It deserves some small notice here.

The first edition, of which only two copies are known to exist, one in America and one in England, both in private libraries, is entitled: *A Breefe Introduction to the skill of Musick, for Song and Viol, by J. P. London printed 1654. Sould by Jo. Playford at his shop in the Inner Temple.* This is engraved on two tablets on what appears to be a representation of an elaborately designed tombstone, adorned with cherubim heads and other sepulchral ornaments.

In the authorship of this little work it is stated that he had the assistance of one Charles Pidgeon, and of Dr. Benjamin Rogers, and Playford acknowledges his indebtedness to earlier treatises. However this may be, it was the most popular book on the science of music for nearly a century. Its rival was Christopher Simpson's *Compendium of Practical Musick*. This was first published in 1665 and its ninth and last edition issued about 1775.

Playford's *Introduction* was enriched by a treatise on "The Art of Descant or Composing of Musick in parts" by Dr. Thomas Campion, with annotations by Christopher Simpson. Later this was replaced by a similar treatise from the pen of Henry Purcell, published in the later edition of the work.

But Playford was famous for his "Catch" books. We of the present day know very little of Catches that were so much the amusement of convivial souls in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Those three reckless and gay figures in "Twelfth Night" were familiar with the Catch as it stood in Shakespeare's time, and it is quite likely that those performers who took the parts of Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aquecheek and the Clown roared out the catch "Hold thy peace, Knave", to the delight of the Globe and Bankside audiences.

Catches appealed chiefly to those whose sense of wit and humour overpowered their delicacy. Gross as the wit was, it required talent and ingenuity of no mean order in their composition, both in a literary and in a musical sense. The Catch might look harmless enough on paper, but its proper singing brought out a hidden meaning that might be disconcerting to any but the jovial roisterers who sang and listened to it. As the reader no doubt is aware, the Catch was sung by a single singer all through, but at certain points the other voices one after another joined in and in the confusion of words frequently a hidden

meaning was revealed. For example, take Dr. Callcott's well known "Ah how Sophia", which on the surface is merely a lover's fretful plaint but in the singing produces the cries "A house a fire!", followed by "Go fetch the engines", and the calm statement "I'm but a lodger." For handy reference permit me to quote it:

Ah how Sophia can you leave
Your lover, and of hope bereave.
Go fetch the Indian's borrowed plume,
Yet richer far than that you bloom.
I'm but a lodger in your heart
And more than me, I fear, have part.

Thomas Ravenscroft seems to have been the first to record the popular catches of the 16th, and early 17th centuries. He published *Pammelia* in 1609, *Deuteromelia* 1609, and *Melismata* in 1611. These were in quarto and even in Playford's time had become scarce. It remained therefore for John Hilton, a young man of twenty six years, to again set the ball rolling and to publish through Playford and Benson a dainty little oblong book of 120 pages with the punning title, *Catch that catch can; or a choice collection of Catches, Rounds, and Cannons*. This was "sould by John Benson and John Playford" and is dated 1652, though published in the previous year. It was reprinted by Playford in 1658 and many later editions, with the original as a basis, were issued by the Playford family, and by John Young, their successor. The general title of these later catch books was *The Musical Companion*, or *The Pleasant Musical Companion*.

Samuel Pepys, who with all his solemnity loved a broad joke as well as any man, records that on April 15th, 1667, he bought a copy of the *Musical Companion* and "found a great many new fooleries in it." Three days later he "tried two or three grave parts in Playford's new book; my wife pleasing me in singing her part of the things she knew, which is a comfort to my very heart."

Playford was not content with publishing merely minor "fooleries" or simple dance tunes; his scheme included the issue of collections of the best vocal music of the period. From Elizabeth's day to the commencement of the Civil War the musicians of England had been patronised either by the Court itself or by noblemen. Most of them had thrown in their fortunes with their patrons and drawn swords on behalf of the King. Some had been killed in battle, notably William Lawes, who lost his life at the siege of Chester in 1645. Playford had the use of

his manuscript compositions and was in intimate touch with his younger brother, Henry Lawes.

The professional musician during the Commonwealth must have fallen upon rough times. By the command of the Government, organs in churches were either destroyed or remained silent, and most of the nobles were in as bad plight, financially, as the musicians who had depended on their patronage and bounty. When such found in Playford a man who was willing to risk paper, ink and labour in the publication of their compositions, we may suppose they did not quarrel about terms of remuneration. In fact, in the quaint preface attached to *Ayres and Dialogues* by Henry Lawes published by Playford, with the date 1653, light is thrown upon methods of publishing music in the 17th century which is instructive. He tells us that the Stationer (i. e., Playford) "has undergone the charge and trouble of the whole impression" and presumably Lawes relied only on payment in the event of there being a sufficient profit to pay Playford for his outlay and something above that. Lawes further tells us that Playford "had made bold to print in one Book above twenty of my songs whereof I had no knowledge till the book was in the presse, and it seems he found those so acceptable that he is ready for more. Therefore the question is not whether or no my compositions shall be publick, but whether they shall come forth from me or from some other hand; and which is likeliest to afford the true correct copies I leave others to judge."

Playford's vocal publications include a rather bewildering issue and re-issue of *Select Musickall Ayres and Dialogues for one and two voyces to sing to the Theorbo-Lute or Basse Viol composed by John Wilson, Charles Colman, Doctours of Musick, Henry Lawes and William Webb*, dated 1652.

This is the book which Lawes alludes to in his 1653 preface. It was followed by a second book dated 1652, and a third dated 1653—the whole reprinted with additions in 1659 and again re-issued in 1669 as *The Treasury of Musick*. These books comprise indeed a treasury of music and poetry. We find in them poems by Herrick, Lovelace, Waller, Killigrew, Quarles and many another name notable in the 17th century literature. The musical settings are supplied by musicians, their contemporaries, among the best of the time.

In 1656 Playford published Mathew Locke's *Little Consort of three parts containing Pavans, Ayres, Corants, and Sarabands, for Viol, and Violins*. This was popular as late as 1670. In 1659 came forth Christopher Simpson's *Divison Violist* and his

Chelys Minuritionum in 1665, both published by Playford. The Viol and the Violin were beginning to supercede the lute tribe and Playford, quick to realise the change in taste, was not slow to supply lessons for the same. *Apollo's Banquet for the treble Violin* was always being reprinted with additional matter and *Court Ayres*, 1655, was reprinted in 1662 as *Courtly Masquing Ayres for Viols or Violins*. *Musick's Recreation on the Lyra Viol* of 1652 was constantly being advertised and reissued until 1690. The later title was *Musick's Recreation on the Viol Lyra Way*, and editions are dated 1661, 1669, and 1682. It was a collection of "lessons" for the viol with the notation in tablature, which was the "lyra way" of reading the music for a fretted viol. The Harpsichord and Spinnet were not neglected, for a popular book was *Musick's Hand Maide presenting new and pleasant lessons for the Virginals and Harpsycon*, dated 1663. Later editions are dated 1678 and 1696, while the *Second Part of Musick's Hand Maide* was advertised in 1666 and as late as 1689. They were oblong quarto volumes adorned with a picture of a lady playing the spinet or virginals, while a boy playing the violin and a lady singing helped in the composition.

The smaller instruments were also attended to by Playford. *Musick's Delight on the Cithren* is a charming little oblong book in tablature, with a delightful frontispiece of a gentleman playing the Cithren. The edition is dated 1666, but there are earlier ones commencing with *A Booke of New Lessons for the Cithren and Gittern* dated 1653. Probably the same work is that entitled *Musick's Solace on the Cithren* advertised in 1664-1665, 1669 and, as newly reprinted, in 1672. Most of these editions are now extinct.

In his preface to the 1666 edition Playford gives a racy flavour by saying:

Not a city dame, though a tap wife, but is anxious to have her daughter taught by Mounsieur La Novo Kickshawibus on the Gittar which instrument is but a new old one, used in London in the time of Q Mary as appears by a book printed in English of instructions and lessons for the same about the beginning of Q Elizabeth's reign, being not much different from the Cithren only was strung with gut strings, this with wyre which was in more esteem (till of late years) than the gittar. Therefore to revive and restore this harmonious instrument I have adventured to publish this little book of instructions and lessons. John Playford.

The book Playford alludes to in the above note is probably a translation of Adrian LeRoy's *Premier Liure de Tabulature de*

Guitarre, Paris, 1551, with a second and a third book added later.

Besides the cithren another instrument was growing into favour—the flute à bec, or flageolet, or recorder. Mr. Thomas Greeting was a professional teacher of this and Mr. Samuel Pepys employed him to teach his wife simple airs on this little pipe, for the culture and beauty in wives was one of Mr. Pepys' ideals. She could sing and probably attempts had been made to teach her the complexities of the lute but, so far as we know, nothing came of it. Mr. Pepys now and again in his diary records his wife's aptitude. On April 16, 1668, he mentions having bought a copy of Greeting's book for a shilling and this indicates the publication of the first edition of *The Pleasant Companion, or New Lessons and Instructions for the Flageolet*, of which work Playford published several editions, though copies of any edition are now extremely rare. It was published at the modest sum of one shilling, and has a beautifully engraved frontispiece.

But Playford had not lost interest in his clerkly training. He therefore essayed a publication of *Psalms and Hymns in Solemn Musick in four parts*, dated 1671. Playford soon found that the four part arrangement was not a success. In 1679 he advertises:

Whereas some years since I made a large collection of Full Service and Anthems (with the organ parts) of Four Parts for Sides which I intended to have printed but not finding encouragement thereto, have them still by me. If any gentleman shall desire part or all of them I shall be willing to prick them out fairly for them at a reasonable rate.

In 1677 he issued the first edition of his *Whole Book of Psalms* in a three part arrangement. This had such a success that it ended with the twentieth edition in 1757.

It was in 1667 that Playford discovered Henry Purcell, then only nine years of age. In his 1667 edition of the *Musical Companion* he published a three part song "Sweet Tyranness I now resign" headed "Mr. Hen Pursell". Burney claims this as the composition of the father, but Cummings disputes this and assigns it to the son. It was in 1683 that Playford published for the author the well known *Sonnatas of III parts* with a fine portrait of Purcell, aged 24, on the title page.

In 1673 Playford commenced the issue of his *Choice Ayres and Dialogues*. This, in various editions, ran into five books, the last being dated 1684. This is a book of songs "to sing to the Theorbo-Lute or Bass Viol being most of the newest ayres and

songs sung at Court and at the publick theatres, composed by several gentlemen of his Majesty's Musick and others." It has a charming engraving of a lady playing the lute on the title page.

In a note "To all lovers and understanders of Musick" John Playford gives a rather pathetic note. He says:

This fifth book of new songs and ayres had come sooner (by three months) to your hands but the last dreadful frost put an embargo upon the press for more than ten weeks, and to say the truth there was a great unwillingness in me to undertake the pains of publishing any more collections of this nature. But at the request of friends, and especially Mr. Carr who assisted me in procuring some of these songs from the authors, I was prevailed with. Yet indeed the greatest motive was to prevent my friends and countrymen from being cheated with such false work as is daily published by ignorant and mercenary persons, who put musical notes over their songs, but neither minding tune nor right places, turn harmony into discord. Such publications being a scandal and abuse to the science of musick and all ingenious artists and professors thereof. This I conceive I was bound to let my reader understand, and that in what hitherto I have made public of this nature my pains and care has ever been not only to procure perfect copies but also to see them true and well printed. But now I find my age and the infirmities of nature will not allow me the strength to undergo my former labours again. I shall leave it to two young men, my own son and Mr. Carrs' son, who is one of his Majesty's Musick, and an ingenious person whom you may rely upon that what they publish of this nature shall be carefully corrected and well done, myself engaging to be assisting to them the overseeing the press for the future, that what songs they make public be good and true musick both for the credit of the authors and to the content and satisfaction of the buyers and that they may never be otherwise is the desire of your most faithful servant John Playford.

For some time John Playford had been in friendly business relations with John Carr, who kept a music shop at the Middle Temple Gate. It is rather likely that Playford and Carr were related by marriage. The suggestion that they were brothers-in-law is strengthened by a rhyme in Carr's publication *Comes Amoris*. In this he says:

But my brother John Playford and I shall present you
'Ere long with a book I presume will content ye.

Robert Carr and Henry Playford took up the business which John Playford, as we have seen, had resigned, and in November, 1684, commenced publishing with the first book of *The Theater of Musick*.

In this work "R. C." and "H. P.," the two sons, address the "authors in general of the following musical compositions" and request that:

when you have made any new songs you will be pleased to leave copies of them under your own hands either at Mr. John Playford's shop in the Inner Temple, or at Mr. John Carr's shop at the Middle Temple Gate, and then we do faithfully promise forthwith to print them from such copies whereby you may be assured to have them perfect and exact. This as it will prevent such as daily abuse you by publishing your songs lame and imperfect and singing them about the streets like ordinary ballads.

It may be mentioned that Robert Carr was a violist in the King's band of musicians.

In the earlier part of his career Playford had no rival in the music publishing business, but as time got on one or two booksellers entered into the line with no great success while the elder Playford was alive, and the musical works of his period that were not published by him may be counted on the fingers.

John Playford was something of a composer himself. He is responsible for several psalm tunes and his three part song "Comely Swain why sittst thou so", which appeared in the *Musical Companion*, had vogue in its own day as well as in a later one. There are also other part songs in this same collection of his composition. Such are:—"Quench in Sprightly wine your grief", "You merry poets", "Diogenes was merry in his tub", "Come come my Celia", "God Cupid", "Hark how the gladsome spheres", "Arm, Arm, see the foe in sight", "March to the field", "Hail happy days", "Rise up my dear", "Come lovers all to me", "Come Damon leave thy sadness now", "Come here's to thee Jack in a cup of old Sack", "Cupid has placed us in this bower", "Though the tyrant hath ravish'd my dearest away", "Come sir let us drink and sing." His final effort was a loyal ode to the reigning monarch and his consort, "Carolus, Catharina, Rex and Regina." The titles of the above catches show that Playford could be in merry mood when occasion demanded.

John Playford was married about 1655-6, and his wife, Hannah, was talented enough to be mistress of a boarding school for young gentlewomen in the rural district of Islington opposite the church. In 1659 he advertises this school in his *Select Ayres and Dialogue's* as being "over against the church where young gentlewomen might be instructed in all manner of curious work, as also reading, writing, musick, dancing, and the French tongue." It is worth while noticing that such schools where "musick and dancing" were taught were in existence during the stern reign of the Puritans.

In 1680 Mrs. Playford had either died or given up the school, for in Smith's *Protestant Intelligencer* April 7th, 1681, the school is advertised for sale thus:

In the High Street over against the Church in Islington, is to be let a fair house containing about 20 rooms, one whereof is 45 feet long, with outhouse for a wash-house, coach-house, with a convenient courtyard before the said house, and behind it a fair garden opening into the best fields for air about the town; Also two pleasant summer houses in the said garden. The person who will let the house has 16 years to come in his lease which he is willing to dispose of for a moderate fine without any rent, or otherwise, by the year for an easy rent (under £20 per annum) without any fine. Notwithstanding he has laid out in improving the premises above £400. Enquire at Mr Playford's shop near the Temple Church, or at Mr. John Hall's, a goldsmith, and near the Nag's head Tavern in Leadenhall Street, or at the said Mr. Hall's country house over against Islington Church aforesaid.

What a delightful house it must have been! Probably Tudor, or early Jacobean, and no doubt one with a history. One's mouth waters at the fine old staircases and oak pannelling which it must have had; while the "fair garden" with the two summer houses overlooking the fields of Pentonville, and with a distant view of the busy city would certainly have been a delight on summer days.

And now comes the end of John Playford. In his sixty-first or second year (in 1683-4), as we have seen, he proclaimed his infirmities and relinquished his business to his son Henry and the son of John Carr, his friendly brother publisher. On the 5th of November, 1686, he made his will, but by some mischance it was neither signed nor witnessed. It was proved by his handwriting in August, 1694. His death must have occurred in the later part of the year 1686 and he was probably buried in the Temple Church. As on their publication his works called forth the usual poetical eulogiums, so did his death. One, an anonymous composition prefixed to the late editions of his *Introduction to the Skill of Musick*, begins:

We must submit; in vain with anxious strife
We labour to support this load of life.
No prayers, nor penitence, no tears prevail
With the Grim Tyrant of this mournful vale.

* * * * *

Our brittle glass, thin blown and weakly burn'd
Drops its short hour and never more is turned.
Oh, never more (my friend) must my charm'd ear
Thy cheerful voice and skilful musick hear
For ever silent is that Tuneful Lyre
Which men instead of Beasts did long inspire.

When Playford's hand the well strung harp adorned
The principle of life and sense we scorn'd.
Pleas'd with the sound we wish'd our Vital air
Might only enter at the ravish'd ear.

and so forth for many lines.

Nahum Tate, the versifier of the Psalms, gave forth a "Pastoral Elegy on the death of Mr. John Playford" which, in a lighter strain, begins:

Gentle Shepherds you that know
The charms of tuneful breath,
That Harmony in Grief can show
Lament for Pious Theron's death.

etc., etc.

This was set to music by Henry Purcell.

And now let me correct many erroneous statements which Hawkins and others, including the writer of the Playford article in the *National Dictionary of Biography*, have made. Firstly, John Playford senior was not a printer and did not, as Hawkins has it, invent about 1660 "the new tyed note, wherein by one or two strokes continued from the bottom of each note to the next the quavers and semi-quavers were formed into compages of four or six as the time required". As a matter of fact "the new tyed note" was not introduced into type-printed music during the lifetime of either of the two John Playfords. The joining of the quaver and semiquavers in movable music type was first introduced by Thomas Moore, a London music printer, about 1688. It was followed by J. Heptinstall, his partner, and improved by William Pearson. In engraved and written music the tying of the notes had generally been done; for proof see The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, and other MSS., also *Parthenia*, 1611, and other engraved music.

While it is quite easy with the stroke of a pen or a graver to unite musical notes it is a different matter to do so with movable music type and it was not until the period I mention that the difficulty was overcome. Even to-day the printing of music by movable type is a complex matter and takes both time and special skill to effect. A double printing in which the staves and the notes were printed separately was at one time tried, but it was found more troublesome than the usual method.

Mention may be made of others of the Playford family. The son, said to be a second son, Henry Playford, was born in 1657 and to him the elder John Playford left his business. Shortly before his father's death in 1686 Henry Playford had

left his father's shop and was publishing "at his shop near Temple Bar", at the same time that his father was publishing from the old address. At the death of his father Henry Playford appears to have returned to the old address, as his imprints give "Near the Temple Church", but in 1696 his address is altered to "near Temple Bar", or "Temple Change", or at the publisher's "house in Arundel Street over against the Blew Ball". This house was probably one occupied by his father in his later years after the disposal of that at Islington.

Henry Playford continued the business with some degree of spirit, but he had to contend with rivals, which his father had not. John Walsh had sprung up, and in 1692 had become "musical instrument maker to his Majesty in the place of one John Shaw, and in 1695, or no doubt before that date, had begun a publishing career which overtopped that of the Playford family.

But his father's old friends, such as were left, did not desert Henry Playford. Dr. Blow and Henry Purcell during their lives gave their works to him for publication and after Purcell's death his widow continued the support.

Henry Playford published with additional matter new editions of such of his father's work as met with ready sale. These included *The Dancing Master*, *Introduction to the Skill of Musick*, the *Whole Book of Psalms* and others. He also issued many fresh works, among which may be mentioned

The Theater of Musick, four books : 1684-1686

The Banquet of Musick, six books : 1684-1692

Deliciæ Musicæ, four books : 1695-1696

Thesaurus Musicus, five books : 1693-1696

Harmonia Sacra, two books, first issued in 1688 and 1693, with later editions.

The New Treasury of Musick in 1695, which was in part a reissue of the *Theater of Musick* and of *Choice Ayres* of the elder Playford.

Orpheus Britannicus, two volumes, issued first in 1698 and 1702, with two other later editions.

He was also the first to issue the celebrated work *Pills to Purge Melancholy*, which (the musical edition) was commenced in 1699 (second volume 1700) and attained its sixth volume in 1720. In strong contrast to the foregoing was *The Divine Companion or David's Harp new tun'd* 1700, which came out in its fourth edition in 1722. Another curious work that it has never been my fortune to see was advertised in 1700: "*The Psalmody; being plain and easie directions to play the psalm tunes by letters instead of notes, fitted to all capacities. Invented by the late Mr.*

John Playford but never before made public. The price of the instrument 15 shillings; the price of the book 1/6." I have only seen this once advertised and one wonders whether it was the precursor of the Tonic Sol Fa system and what the "instrument" was.

Henry Playford may be regarded as the father of the "Free and Easy". He seems to have first carried out the idea of having musical singing clubs in taverns and lest the singing should become chaos he arranged that a master of music should be in attendance to help on beginners in the art. The office of this gentleman merged into that of the chairman of such gatherings in the last century.

The Pleasant Musical Companion and the earlier Playford publications of catches and part songs were the fodder which was provided for these meetings. *The Pleasant Musical Companion* has, as usual, poetical eulogiums prefixed and one signed T. B. begins thus:

To my friend Mr. Henry Playford on his book of catches and his design in setting up a weekly club for the encouragement of Music and good Fellowship.

So, now this is something that's like to be taking
For Music's the Devil without merry making.
A fig for lean scraping and thrumming and thrilling,
What delight can it give without stuffing and swilling.
When our ears must be filled and our Bellies be starv'd;
He's a fool to some tune who will e're be thus serv'd.
Friend Harry, thy foresight prevents this abuse,
Making that which has sweetness, be likewise of use.
And gives life to the senses and strength to the tongue.
Dear Rogue, let me kiss thee, for I vow and protest
I'm so pleas'd with thy project it can't be express'd.
Thy Book's made of Rapture and just's thy design,
Which gives floods of joy with floods of good wine.

etc., etc.

T. B. signs himself "from Mr. Seward's at the Hole in the Wall in Baldwin's Gardens," being Tom Brown, a well known writer of the period.

The junction of the 17th and 18th centuries was a period when picture collecting from the Continent took active form. At the latter part of his life Henry Playford appears to have embarked in the picture trade, selling also prints, from his house in Arundel Street "over against The Blew Ball", which situation was towards the lower end not far from the mud which is now so happily covered by the Thames Embankment.

Henry Playford either died or ceased the music business in 1707, in which year John Cullen "at the Buck between the Two Temple Gates" advertises a large number of the Playford publications, which he had apparently taken over from Henry Playford, occupying, I fancy, the premises which the latter held from about 1696.

We may now follow the fortunes of another of the family—John Playford, junior. The writer in the *Dictionary of National Biography* states that he was nephew to the elder John Playford and that he was born at Stanmore Magna in 1655, and that he was the son of Mathew Playford, rector there. Previous writers have always spoken of the younger John as a son of the elder John, and Mr. Husk in the first edition of Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* states that he was baptised at Islington on Oct. 6, 1665.

As a matter of fact there is a puzzling entry in the register of St. Mary's, Islington, which gives the baptism of John, the son of John and Hannah Playford, with the date the *fifth* of October, 1665. This can hardly be John Playford, the younger and printer, for the simple reason that there is indisputable evidence that in 1679 he was partner with Anne Godbid, the widow of William Godbid, music printer. The dates quoted would make young Playford only thirteen or fourteen when he held the responsible position of partner in a well established printing firm. We cannot imagine that John Playford the elder, a good churchman, would so neglect his duty as a Christian to defer for any length of time his son's baptism.

Therefore we have a difficulty before us as to the identity of the younger John Playford. It may be mentioned that there is a break in the Registers of Baptisms of St. Mary's, Islington, from 1647 to 1662. It is most likely that John Playford the younger was apprenticed to William Godbid, a printer of musical works and of scientific treatises, whose premises were situate in Little Britain.

At the middle of the 17th century few English printers ventured into music printing, as this required a special fount and special knowledge on the part of the compositor.

The printing of music from engraved plates was little practised, although the production of the plate itself was easier than the setting up of type. When it was employed it was chiefly for instrumental works where the notes could be tied, by the tails of quavers and semi-quavers being joined together, which, as I have before said, was a difficulty that had not been overcome in movable type.

Thomas Harper, who had printed for John Playford his early works, had either died or retired, and William Godbid filled his place. Harper was printing music in 1633 and in 1653, which are the earliest and latest dates I can assign to him as regards musical typography. Godbid was printing music in 1657 and he probably died about 1679, leaving his widow Anne his business. She promptly took young John Playford into partnership and in that year John Playford, senior, gives a friendly advertisement to the firm by printing at the end of *Campion's Art of Descant*, 1679, thus:

And all such as have anything of Musick to print are desired to take notice that the ancient and only Printing House in England for Variety of Musick and workmen that understand it, is still kept in Little Britain London by A. Godbid and J. Playford, junior. Which is also the usual House for printing Mathematical Books; witness the difficult works of Dr. Pell, Dr. Wallis, Dr. Barrow, Mr. Kersie there printed: your servant J. Playford.

The partnership of young Playford and Anne Godbid did not last long, for some time about 1682 her name is absent from the imprints and John Playford's name stands alone. He printed for the elder Playford and for Henry Playford such works as they issued between 1682 and 1685. These include the fifth book of *Choice Ayres and Songs*; the first book of *The Theater of Musick* and the 7th edition of the *Dancing Master*.

Young Playford died in the previous or the same year as the elder Playford, viz., 1686, and the issue of May 6th, 1686, of *The London Gazette* contains an advertisement for the sale of the printing house in Little Britain. It runs thus:

An ancient printing house in Little Britain, late in the possession of Mr. John Playford, printer, deceased. Well known and ready fitted and accomodated with good presses and all manner of letter for choice works of Musick, Mathematicks, Navigation and all Greek and Latin books. With a fair and convenient dwelling house, and convenient rooms for warehouses; all of which are to be sold as they are ready standing, or lett by lease or yearly rent. Enquire of Mrs. Ellen Playford at the said house over against the Globe in Little Britain.

There has recently been unearthed a petition from his sister, Ellen (or Eleanor) Playford, (see *The Library*, No. 28, Vol. VII) in which she asks that she shall be allowed to carry on her late brother's business at his printing house. It appears that shortly after his death there had been a "restraint" upon printers and Eleanor Playford pointed out that her father had suffered sequestration and was ruined by loyalty to Charles Ist. She also

stated that no other than her brother "could print Mathematicks or Algebray" and that there was only one other man "who does some small matter in Musick." Also, that having sold some small part of his plant she would sell the rest "but there being no person that could do the work." Further, that she "has begun and almost finished an opera for Monsier Grabiea which he must have sent to France to have printed," had she not undertaken the work.

The opera in question is evidently *Albion and Albanus*, by Lewis Grabu, a fine folio dated 1687, with an imprint stating that it is "printed for the author, and are to be sold at the door of the Royal Theater, and by William Nott, booksellers in Pall Mall, 1687." The petition was opposed by Henry Hill and Thomas Newcomb, His Majesty's printers, Henry Hill having purchased several of the printing materials from the petitioner. Her appeal was therefore dismissed. So much for the freedom of the press in those good old days.

Thus ends the chronicle of John Playford and his immediate successors, who each played a part in the musical world of the 17th century of the greatest importance.

Whether any other man could, or would, have filled such a place in English music as did John Playford in such times, unsettled and adverse, is doubtful to improbability.

It was he who came to the rescue of English music and he was bold enough and far sighted enough not to confine his scope of work to one particular branch of it. He catered for every class and was equally successful in his selection in every portion of the art. How much music of his period would have never been written, or if so, only remained in insecure manuscript, we may only imagine. But we may be sure that a big hiatus in English Music would have existed had John Playford been a timid man, content with the humdrum duties of Clerk to the Temple Church.